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Subject: Faults.

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SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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CONTENTS OF VOLUME I.

I. The Duty of Using One's Life for Others. II. The God of Comfort. III. The Nobility of Confession. IV. Self-Control Possible to All. V. Pilate, and his Modern Imitators. VI. The Strong to Bear with the Weak. VII. Growth in the Knowledge of God. VIII. Contentment in all Things. IX. Abhorrence of Evil. X. Privileges of the Christian. XI. The Love of Money. XII. Divine Influence on the Human Soul. XIII. Moral Affinity, the True Ground of Unity. XIV. The Value of Deep Feelings. XV. Works Meet for Repentance. XVI. Malign Spiritual Influences. XVII. The Old and the New. XVIII. The Hidden Christ. XIX. Well-Wishing not Well-Doing. XX. Sphere of the Christian Minister. XXI. Suffering, the Measure of Worth. XXII. The Victory of Hope in Sorrow. XXIII. The Crime of Degrading Men. XXIV. Self-Conceit in Morals. XXV. Morality, the Basis of Piety. XXVI. The Trinity. XXVII. The Family, as an American Institution

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- II. CONDUCT, THE INDEX OF FEELING.
- III. THE SYMPATHY OF CHRIST.
- IV. RETRIBUTION AND REFORMATION.
- V. COUNTING THE COST.
- VI. SCOPE AND FUNCTION OF A CHRISTIAN
- VII. HUMAN IDEAS OF GOD. [LIFE.]
- VIII. THE GRACIOUSNESS OF CHRIST.
- IX. EVILS OF ANXIOUS FORETHOUGHT.
- X. THE BEAUTY OF MORAL QUALITIES.
- XI. THE PROBLEM OF JOY AND SUFFERING IN LIFE.
- XII. THE APOSTOLIC THEORY OF PREACHING.
- XIII. THE RIGHT AND THE WRONG WAY OF GIVING PLEASURE.

- XIV. THE PERFECT MANHOOD.
- XV. DISSIMULATING LOVE.
- XVI. THE DOOR.
- XVII. MORAL THEORY OF CIVIL LIBERTY.
- XVIII. PEACEABLENESS.
- XIX. SOUL-DRIFTING.
- XX. THE HIDDEN LIFE.
- XXI. DISCOURAGEMENTS AND COMFORTS IN CHRISTIAN LIFE.
- XXII. HINDRANCES TO CHRISTIAN DEVELOPMENT.
- XXIII. LOVING AND HATING.
- XXIV. AUTHORITY OF RIGHT OVER WRONG.
- XXV. THE POWER OF LOVE.
- XXVI. THE PRECIOUSNESS OF CHRIST.

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FAULTS.

"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another."—JAMES, V. 16.

Nothing can be further from that discreet good sense which pervades the New Testament, than to inculcate a habit of tattling about one's self. It is extremely repulsive to have one narrate his sicknesses and ailments of body; and hardly less so his faults of disposition, of conduct, and of nature. There is a reserve in this matter which belongs to true delicacy and modesty, and so to wisdom. James encourages no such gossip about one's self. Yet we are commanded to *confess our faults*. *Confess* here is equivalent to *admit*. We are to admit them when they occur, and when they are charged upon us. When, as is usually the case, there is a question between us and others, we are to admit ourselves to be in the wrong, we are to acknowledge our faults.

We shall attempt to show the nature of faults, their effects, and the duty and reasons of confessing them.

I. The term *fault* in scripture is frequently employed as synonymous with *sin*. It also has a special sense, and relates to small sins. This meaning has become fastened to the word in modern usage; so that unless it is qualified by some circumstance in the text, we always understand the term *fault*, applied to human conduct, to mean an infelicity, an infirmity, a foible, a small evil; and we are accustomed to mark a clear and sharp distinction between sins, in all their specifications, and simple faults. They are of a lower moral grade.

Just such a term is needed. There is, in fact, just that discrimination to be made between grave sins and minor infelicities. This distinction represents the yet universal imperfection of man's nature in all its parts—the crudeness of his judgment, and the unskilfulness of his handling of himself.

There may be a perversion of the intellect, there may be a wanton

misuse of it, that we should call *sinning*; or there may be an imperfect or poor use of it, which we should call *faulty*. There are sins and vices and crimes developed from the human passions; but then, the human passions may be guilty only of infelicities of appetite, of yearnings, of minor discords. Faults represent the unconscious imperfections of moral conduct—the ten thousand little sins of daily life which do not argue intentional wrong, and which yet are annoying and mischievous.

Faults in this point of view belong to every part of a man's nature, and to every portion of his conduct—to the tongue, to the hand, to the temper, to the reason, to the conscience, to every affection, and to every sentiment. There is no one part of a man's nature that is without fault; and no man can carry himself through a single day without faults multitudinous. They are the signs and tokens of men's universal imperfection. They are called *failings* sometimes, when they result from weakness. Over-actions and excesses they are on the other side. They are now the result of excessive activity; but then, by-and-by, of feebleness in action. Too much blood beating in the passions forces them to insobriety. Too little fire in them, and they fail to generate that steam by which life is kept in vigorous motion; and the *too much* and *too little* are alike faults, unless they go on to something more grave and serious. The *just enough* and *not too much* are very hard, however, to find. Human feelings are like the mercury in the barometer, changing to the variations of pressure, through every hour, or like the mercury in the thermometer, varying according to the quantity of heat in the atmosphere, and never long stationary. We carry a mind so subtle and sensitive that it is perpetually changing and varying.

If one considers how much every man has to carry along—his equipments; his intellectual faculties; his moral sentiments; his affections; his passions and appetites; and all of them affiliated with the body, affecting it, and being themselves affected by it; if one considers how large is that battalion which has been enlisted in him; if one considers how sensitive the human soul is to influences; and if one considers in the midst of what whirling excitements he is carrying himself in the experience of the household, in the strifes of business, or in the heat of public life, he will not wonder that no man keeps his exact equipoise, and that, quite aside from downright sins, life swarms with faults.

There are two extremes of opinion respecting faults. The one regards them with an excessive, uncharitable emphasis of blame. The other sometimes utterly ignores them, and sometimes ostentatiously undervalues them, as factors of moral results. Either extreme is

wrong. Faults are not sins, necessarily, though they breed sins; and yet, they are not harmless. There is great danger in them, and great mischief in them, and great misery in them. They should therefore be studied, outgrown, corrected. It is to help you in this regard that I shall open the subject further this morning.

II. Let us consider the effects, upon human life and character, of faults—not of grave mistakes; not of great sins of the strong arm and nimble foot; but those ten thousand little things that men do which are not just right, which they themselves could wish they had not done, and which everybody else could wish they had not done, but which are passed by, and of which it is said, “These are their weaknesses.” We say, by way of excusing them, “We all have our faults.” And so we brush them away.

There is a right charity on this subject; but it is wiser for each of us to take heed to our faults. For,

First, Faults are often stepping-stones to heinous sins. They go before and prepare the way. They tend to dull moral sensibility. They tend to make us self-indulgent, negligent and careless in regard to perfectness of thought, and feeling, and conduct. By so much as we fail to reach it, we should cling to it as an ideal all the more tenaciously. This is especially true of faults in the direction of the moral sentiments. A very slight carelessness in truth-telling will lead by-and-by to the gravest temptations towards falsehood. This is the reason that the Master says, “He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much.” Small faults are baits and toles to draw men up to greater ones, so that their mischief is not measured by their own diameter, but by that which they lead to.

Foolish birds are the turkeys, that never lift up their heads when they are feeding, and never let them down when they are not. So, in the West, men are accustomed to select a sort of slope, or side hill, and cut a little channel, or path, and surround it with a kind of rail fence, without roof or any protection. Along this path they strew corn—which is very good. Corn *per se* is excellent for turkeys. And the wild turkeys come in flocks and pick up the corn, following the path, and do not look up to see where they are being led to till they have passed under the lower rail, and got into the enclosure; and then, there being no corn there, they lift up their heads, and see where they are. They cannot fly over the fence (a turkey cannot rise on his wings unless he has a chance to run), and they cannot get out unless they lower their heads, and that they will not do; and so they are caught. The corn is not bad in itself, but see what it leads to. It is strewn along the way to a pen purposely devised to catch the fool turkeys, and they, picking it up, are caught.

Of thousands of faults men say, "This is not much." No, it is not much; but it is laid along your path in such a way that the first thing you know you will find yourself surrounded by a pen of dishonesty from which you cannot creep nor fly out. Faults are toles which lead to things that are worse.

A very wide space of uncertainty lies between honesty and dishonesty. We ought not to say that irregularity, or carelessness, or a certain obtuseness of honor, is dishonesty. I hear men in the street say, "I do not suppose that man to be dishonest; but his sense of honor allows him to do what I never could do." Irregularity, carelessness, and a low sense of honor may not themselves be sins; but they may lead men into that region where sins will be inevitable. And the fault, whatever it may be in itself, is very dangerous on account of that which it leads to.

There is a little gipsey girl in the old castle, and some one says to the lord, "You have an enemy there." "What! that little gipsey girl?" says the lord, "what can she do? Here am I with my armed men; and every gate and door and window is bolted and barred. I guess she cannot take the castle." No, she cannot take it; but at dead of night she can go and draw back some bolt, and let men in that can take it. And there is many and many a fault that is not itself strong enough to do you much harm, but that is strong enough to open the door and let temptations in that can take you captive and destroy you. Therefore faults are many of them to be watched against, and feared, not so much for what they are in themselves, as for that which they may bring upon you.

Again. Faults unwatched tend to run together, and so to become far more potent than they are in detail. A little sharpness in a person's voice occasionally is not unpleasant. A little spirit is necessary. It is of the nature of spice. Life without anything in it, you know, is dough; and therefore a little temper—just a little spice—raises the dough, and makes bread of it. But a little more temper, and a little more, and a little more, and you are a shrew and a scold. The result is of great moment; but it is made up of the sum of little things, each one of which is apparently of not much importance.

What is there on earth so small as mist-drops? And even when, chilled by the cold in the atmosphere, a few of them come together, they fall as scattered drops of rain upon the ground. They can hardly make a leaf wink. And yet, when these drops fall in rapid succession, and continuously, and drop finds drop, and they run along together, a rill is formed. And another rill meets that one. And by and by there is a stream as big as your wrist. And such streams are the fathers of rivers, mighty and irresistible. And little things, that do

not amount to much in themselves, if there are enough of them, and they flow together long enough, constitute irresistible forces.

There is nothing that is more easily crushed than a small spider; but if you let him alone he breeds other spiders; and they will breed still other spiders. Did you ever see what a swarm of spiders will spring from one egg? And yet, all of them, soon after they are hatched, not only are predatory, but are weavers. Great is the tribe of weavers. Each goes to work to make himself a house—and that is well enough for a spider, that does not know any better. One of these spiders, perhaps, is in my window, and sets about making his house there. He does not seem to amount to much; but he has a power that is not to be despised. If I were to say that that little speck of a spider was an antagonist of the sun, and that it would beat the sun all hollow, you would laugh me to scorn; but it is so. For presently he has a brood of spiders—five hundred of them—and they set to work to spin their webs, and run them from side to side, from top to bottom, and from corner to corner; and by and by the window is covered all over. And particles of dust, flying through the air, settle on it, and fill up the little spaces between the threads. And after a while the spiders spin other webs and cover over the first ones. And the dust settles on these. And in a year, let the sun get through that window if he can! Big as he is, and strong as he is, the spider is more than a match for him.

So a multitude of little faults obscure moral sight, and dim a man's outlook, and substantially put out his eyes, so that he cannot see. Although each one of them is very small, they are very effective. Beware of faults that tend to reproduce themselves continually.

Faults also prevent true growth in life. There is a great difference, of course, between faults that prevent growth, and those that do not. There are many that do not seem to do it; but there are some that do do it. You may give a tree a good soil, and a good summer; and if that tree is a little sluggish, and it falls behind a little, it will be attacked by moss, which is a parasitic plant that draws its nourishment partly from the tree, and partly from the air; and it will very likely be attacked by a fly which is another kind of parasite that feeds upon the leaf. Each particular speck of moss, each particular fungus, that hangs itself upon the tree, amounts to very little. One apple-tree is ten million times bigger than one of those little plants that feed on it; but each one of these epiphytes shoots its little roots into the tree; and being multiplied by millions, they suck out the sap, and diminish the vigor of the tree, and prevent its growth. There are thousands of little faults that multiply on men, and act in the same way. The men become bark-bound, and leaf-blighted, and cease to have moral growth.

Faults, again, propagate themselves silently and secretly, and very

dangerously; and they do mischief far from the point at which they start, and do mischiefs too, that apparently are quite beyond their own nature.

Up above the fifth story, there is just a pin's point that has rusted in the roof; and the painter has not been called in (for the man is economical, and does not intend to paint his roof too often). It being only a pin's point, there can but one drop get through at a time, and only a small one at that, and only occasionally can one get through—not oftener than once in fifteen minutes. And the man says, "What is that?" and laughs to scorn the idea that there is danger that he needs to be much afraid of. Yet, the first drop finds its way down, near the partition, to the attic floor. And by-and-by another follows it (for leaks never sleep, but work nights and days). And by-and-by another one follows that. This is going on at the very top of the house, and the people are down at the bottom. After a while there is enough water to start a new line; and it leaks through into the next room. Now you shall see that the ceiling begins to be discolored; and all along down the wall are streaks. And, the rain continuing through days and days, the leak continues. By-and-by the water gets into the next story, and creeps in behind the secretary and book-case, and dampens and moistens the books, and gets hold of the papers, and molds them. And going down still further, to the next story, it gets at the pictures, and water-colored drawings, and engravings; and they are all damaged. Going down still further, it gets into the closet where the linen and cotton are kept; and they are all dampened and moistened. And all the way down there is a dampness and moisture that is unwholesome. The servant comes down sneezing in the morning; and the children come down coughing; and the old folks wonder why it is that they have the rheumatism so in a house that has such a good cellar, and is so well constructed, and has always been so healthy. There it is, that little insignificant leak; but drop following upon drop, through days and nights, has spoiled the roof, and spoiled the ceiling, and spoiled the paper on the wall, and spoiled the books, and spoiled the pictures and engravings, and spoiled the linen and cotton, and injured the health of man, woman and child.

Are not faults mischievous? Are there not persons that have leaks in the roof—yes, and other leaks besides? Is it not these continual droppings that spoil the fairest learning—books; that spoil the fairest dispositions and qualities—pictures and engravings; that spoil the fairest treasures and riches? Everything in a man may be moulded and shrunk and spoiled by these little perpetual infelicities of the temper and passions, or malign feelings, or what not.

Faults destroy beauty and symmetry of character, just as effectually

as sins do, frequently. The sense of proportion, the sense of fineness, the sense of harmonious combination, which constitutes what is called *art* when applied to physical things, also enters into every true and proper conception of human character. Character is a thing of symmetry, and proportion, and beauty; and any thing that tends to mar its beauty, or take away its symmetry, or disturb its proportion, tends to destroy the final form of the glorious ideal of true character.

A picture may be spoiled by being torn, or slashed; a bomb or ball may burst through the canvas and destroy it; but then, a picture in a neglected convent may be steamed by the range, and smoked by the chimney, and dimmed by the gathering dust of ages, and be put out by these silent incrustations of time as effectually as if it were taken out of the frame and burned. And as it is in art, so it is in character. You can overlay beauty, you can mar perfectness of quality or faculty, by little faults. And the displeasure is greater, frequently, when the thing is marred, than when it is destroyed.

I would a great deal rather that that exquisite vase, one of the fairest that I have, had been broken outright, and thrown away, than to have had it cracked. I have lost all pleasure in it. I turn it round so that no crack can be seen; I fix it, like a good Christian that puts the best foot foremost; but I know that there is a crack on the back side. I cannot use it for flowers, because it will not hold water; and I cannot use it to look at, because I know there is that ugly crack, though it is not in sight; and I wish somebody would smash it, and throw it away!

A man has a large emerald, but it is "feathered," and he knows an expert would say, "What a pity that it has such a feather!" it will not bring a quarter as much as it otherwise would; and he cannot take any satisfaction in it. A man has a diamond; but there is a flaw in it, and it is not the diamond that he wants. A man has an opal, but it is imperfect, and he is dissatisfied with it. An opal is covered with little seams, but they must be the right kind of seams. If it has a crack running clear across, it is marred, no matter how large it is, and no matter how wonderful its reflections are. And this man is worried all the time because he knows his opal is imperfect; and it would worry him even if he knew that nobody else noticed it.

So it is in respect to dispositions, and in respect to character at large. Little cracks, little flaws, little featherings in them, take away their exquisiteness and beauty, and take away that fine finish which makes moral art. How many noble men there are who are diminished, who are almost wasted, in their moral influence! How many men are like the red maple! It is one of the most gorgeous trees, both in spring, blossoming, and in autumn, with its crimson foliage. But it

stands knee-deep in swamp-water, usually. To get to it, you must wade, or leap from bog to bog, tearing your raiment, and soiling yourself. I see a great many noble men, but they stand in a swamp of faults. They bear fruit that you fain would pluck, but there are briars and thistles and thorns all about it; and to get it you must make your way through all these hindrances.

How many persons there are that are surrounded by a thousand little petty faults! They are so hedged in by these things that you lose all the comfort and joy that you would otherwise have in them. How many men there are of whom it is said, "There was the making of a man in him, but he is full of faults. Pity that he has spoiled himself!" But if we should pity all the pitiable things which we see in our fellow men, we should not have time to do anything else but pity, men are so faulty. And if men, prompted by charity, pity their fellows, how much must God and angels pity men!

Once more. Faults are great wasters of happiness. They are the source of frets. They mar our peace. They keep up petty discords. They are so small as to elude the grasp. They are like a piano (mine, for instance) that has been standing all summer in an empty house without being tuned. Some of the notes are too low, and some too high; and they are all of them just a little out of tune. The instrument is good, and sound, and pretty nearly chorded; but it is not quite in tune. And the *not quite* takes away all comfort from the musician who sits down to it. He plays, it may be, through the middle range without much discomfort; but when he strikes a note in the upper range, it makes him cringe. And it is so with happiness. Happiness is harmony. It requires the faculties to be harmonious all the way through. Violent excitement is seldom a source of great happiness. It gives joy for the moment, but it is not often the source of what we call true happiness. That comes from a lower range of action.

It is just at this point that faults disturb a man's happiness, and mar his enjoyment. Therefore you will find that men are almost never unhappy at all in proportion to the real afflictions which befall them. Men oftentimes are a great deal happier under severe strokes than they were before the strokes came.

A man is prosperous in his affairs. The foundation is well laid, and the superstructure is going up nobly. Men serve him. He commands them. The heavens are propitious, and the sea and land favor him. But after all, he is troubled, and he worries and frets. He is unhappy, though he can scarcely tell you why. His companion at home, all sweet and serene, says to him in the morning, "My dear, why are you so gloomy?" He cannot tell why he is; but he *is*. There are little minute discords all through him. There is the friction of faculty on

faculty. There is a little under-gratification here, and a little over-gratification there. His mind is out of joint. It is not harmonious with itself. And faults are waters of great force. Though they are small, they are powerful in destroying that balance of the mind which makes perfect harmony.

Faults are also dangerous, in their own way, because they have insect fecundity. They are apt to swarm. And though a few of them may not do much harm, when men come to have a great many of them they will avail as much as if they were actual transgressions. It is not necessary that there should be wolves, and lions, and bears in the woods to drive hunters out of them. Black flies, or musquitos, or gnats, will drive them out, if there are enough of them. These little winged points of creation make up what they lack in individual strength by their enormous multitude. You might kill a million, and make no impression upon them. Faults oftentimes swarm and become strong and dangerous by reason of their multitude. Multitude, in such cases, is equivalent to power.

The effect of faults is very great, also, upon a man's influence. Of course much depends on the underlying power of the individual; but frequently men have no personal charm, and no personal influence, on account simply of little blemishes which only need to be removed to enable them to shine out and be strong men. I have known men who failed in life, not from a lack of great powers, but from faults that marred the use of their powers.

I know that persons without faults are generally thought to be uninteresting. I think they are myself. But it makes a great difference where the faults are, and of what sort they are. What are called *perfect people* are marbleistic. They are people who do not do wrong, generally, because they do not do anything. They are cold and statue-like. I would as lief hold communion with a box of wax candles, as with a set of perfect folks, who are so cold and proper that they do not have any faults. That kind of perfect people lead us to say, frequently, that faults and sins make folks interesting. But, as I have already said, it depends a great deal upon what sort they are. There is a vein of truth in this; but you must be careful not to generalize too fast. What we want is to see that everybody, in proportion as he is strong and great, is really humane, and is really of us, and has sympathy with us. Therefore, if a man is perfect; if he is symmetrical in his strength and wisdom; and if, at the same time, his kindness and sympathy and gentleness are such that they are all the while breaking out into faults, so that we feel his heart right against ours, then we like him, and say that these faults make him interesting. But they are little overactions of goodness and benevolence and pity, or they would not make him so interesting.

We like the scholarly man who is encyclopedic in his knowledge, and who yet is cheated by his boot black. He could calculate the eclipses of the sun, and follow the planets in their courses, and in their utmost wanderings; you could not cheat him in regard to the remotest part of the stellar universe, to the amount of the smallest fraction. But a boy brushes his boots, and he gives him twenty five cents instead of ten; and the boy makes him think that is right; and he goes away, and everybody laughs at it. And really, they like the old fellow better after that, the fault being one of generosity, and trust, and kindness.

We like faults that bring men down to us in affection, in beneficence, and in sympathy. A man who is cold, and does not care for his neighbor, nor for human life, though he were like an angel, or like a God, is a devil; for that it is to be a devil, not to care for the happiness of another. And the higher you lift him up, the stronger you make him, the more people do not like him. They do not like to see this cold pride, this hard power, made radiant and bright, and they will not call it beautiful. But if a man is large, and is filled with all manner of gifts, carried high, while at the same time he has faults of kindness which ally him to his fellow men, then people think "That is grand! that is glorious! I like a man with faults!" So do I; but I do not want faults in the wrong place. Faults of the passions, faults of selfishness and pride and avarice, are hateful. The faults of love are beautiful. The faults of love are like the lisping words from youthful beauty. The faults of love are like the prattling English of little children. The faults of love are like the witching little mistakes that are made in the nursery and in the parlor. The only faults that should be tolerated are the faults of sympathy, the faults of pure love and goodness—not faults of evil.

I might go on and show a great many other things about faults; for, as they are multitudinous, so the theme itself is fertile; but this must suffice.

We are commanded, then, to *confess our faults*. To whom? The priest? Yes. The priest may be just as good as if he were not a priest! It ought not to be set down against a man if he is a priest. It ought not to be set down against a man if he is rich. A man may be good and yet be rich; and a man may be good and yet be a priest. And if any man knows a priest who is a good man, and is willing to listen to him and give him good advice, there is no earthly reason why he may not go to him. There is no reason why he must; but there is no reason why he may not, provided he goes to him, not as a priest, but as a sensible man who has a heart of sympathy, and a desire to help his fellow creatures.

But that is not what is meant, evidently, in the text. "Confess your

faults *one to another.*" Do you not know that the penumbra in social life comes where persons begin a defence of their opinions. "You did it." "I did not." "You said so and so." "I did not say so and so." I refer to the ten thousand little faults, such, for instance, as the fault of justice, where one child says, "This is mine, and you shall not have it;" and another child claims it, and will not give it up—that is, where they are *on their consciences*. You shall often see faults of this sort exhibited by husband and wife. All through life are men that will defend their faults, and stand up and argue about them.

Frequently a man will admit his great sins, but not his faults. The apostle says, "You are to own your faults." If a man says, "You were proud," say, "Yes, I was proud." "You ought not to have done that." "Well, I ought not to have done it." "You said that through vanity." "It is true, I did. I was under the influence of vanity, and I sacrificed you through vanity. I confess it. Help me out of it next time." "You were over eager, and you did not settle that matter as you ought to have done, between you and me, considering what we are to each other." "No, I did not." "You were not just to those young men under your charge. You thought of your own interest, and did not think of theirs. You did not put yourself in their places. You did not think of them, nor their mothers, nor anybody else except yourself. You were hard and unjust." "Well, I think I was. Yes, that was a fault. I did not see it then, but I do now, when my attention is called to it."

How beautiful it is to see a man confess his faults! So beautiful is it, that I wonder I do not confess mine oftener! But, my dear friends, I find that being virtuous up here, is a very different thing from being virtuous down there. I can preach first rate virtue in sermons, and tell you most excellent things. I would to God I could be as good as I can preach. But I find it very hard; and I know you do, by what I see. We all find it hard, do we not? We are all imperfect. We are all sinners. We all need to confess. When I say that you are wrong, and you say that I am wrong, we need to confess *our faults one to another.* We need to be more gentle, and sympathetic, and loving and hopeful toward each other. As long as you make your faults a bulwark to stand behind and fight me, so long I am your enemy, and you are my foe. But if we could only understand how imperfect we are; if our hearts were only filled with a true humility, if we felt every day of our lives that God had a hard task to get along with us, it would make us far more gentle and amiable.

It is not the offence, but the *defence* of the offence, that makes it hard for us to bear with one another. A man may say to me, "You are a vile sinner;" he may rain his words on me like blows; but if he

comes back when his passion has gone down, with tears in his eyes, and says, "Oh! forgive me; I did not mean it," it is all gone, quicker than a flash of lightning. I love him all the more. The fault is not hard to bear. It is the defending the fault, it is the refusing to make up under fault, that rankles, and makes us ugly in return. Where there is one ugly man, there are two, generally.

How wise, then, is James' command, "Confess your faults one to another." Nor is that all—"and pray one for another." There are two ways of treating faults. One is to leap at them, and make haste to blazon them abroad; or, if restrained from doing that, to create suspicions in the minds of others concerning them. Have you not heard persons say of another's fault, "It is coming out. It will be all through the neighborhood soon. You just wait, and you will know. I cannot tell, because I promised not to; but it will not be long before it will be out." That is one way to treat faults. The other way is to treat them as a mother treats her child's faults. A child is sent home from school for some misdemeanor. It is a dark day for the mother. She goes to her closet, and takes the child in the arms of her heart before God, and says, "Oh Jesus! do not let my lamb be destroyed. Oh! give me wisdom to correct the child." Then, with tears, she gives stripes to the child; and every stroke is a double-acting stroke, which hurts her more than it does the child.

The apostle says, "When your brother offends, or does wrong, go and pray for him. Do not report his fault. Rejoice not in iniquity." And if we prayed more we should blame less; we should be far more tolerant; we should not suspect so much; we should not carry stories so much; we should not do wrong so much. For, there is nothing that makes a man so charitable as that which he has himself suffered.

An old veteran, who has gone through a hundred battles, and is as firm as a rock in the midst of dangers, has a young officer under his command, who, in his first action quivers with fear, and trembles like an aspen leaf. If this superior officer had never seen any service, he would scoff at the young man, and laugh him to scorn; but instead of that, the true man and veteran comes up to the frightened soldier, and says, "My young man, keep cool. You are doing well. I was as scared as you are when I first went into action; but I got over it, and you will get over it." What balm! what magnanimity! There is nothing like the sympathy which is created by our own experience.

Do you see men who have great faults of temper, and who are almost intolerable? If you have had faults of temper you ought to know how to bear with these men. If there is anything that you do not like in your neighbor, look and see if you have not the same thing in yourself in some form or other. Is there something that makes the

company of a certain person distasteful to you? See if the same thing, in some mode of development, has not found a place in you. Look into your hearts and learn to be charitable toward those who sin. It may be that you sin in the sight of God a hundred times more than those whom you blame. I believe that often when we are blaming men, our blame is more sinful before God than their transgression.

By *confessing our faults one to another, and praying for one another*, we learn humility on the one side, and on the other side that large charity which covers transgression and hides a multitude of sins.

Finally, while we are striving to bear our own burdens, and to sustain the faults and shortcomings of our fellow men, let us remember every day what Christ is obliged to bear in and for us. I speak out of the depths of my own experience. When, in the hour of impetuous force, when, intense and sensitive and wilful, I fain would rush on to the condemnation of a fellow man, the thought of what Christ has been obliged to bear from me always tempers the zeal of my indignation; and I say, "If Christ could bear my infirmities, ought I not to bear one of his little children's infirmities?" And so I endeavor to be to others, according to the measure of my nature, what, according to the amplitude and the glory of his nature, God is to me.

Christian brethren, take this matter home. Do not make it a matter of criticism and comment, but, say, "What shall I change in my family to-day? Is there not something that this sermon will enable you to do for the good of your children? Is there not something in this sermon that will make husband and wife better? Are there not some states of things in your neighborhood, are there not some things in your relations to your business, or to your partners in business, or something in your relations to men round about you, that should make you a better man?" Ask God to give you such a sense of your own sinfulness and blameworthiness as shall enable you to forgive those who trespass against you.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

Blessed be thy name, O thou Father of all, for thine excellent goodness, and for the mercy which is over all the work of thine hands. We rejoice to believe that thine eye never slumbers. Thou art always present, unwearied by years; undiminished by age in strength; glorious in holiness; perfect in praise; without variability or shadow of turning, thou same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Thou art not changed by reason of our changes. Thy promises are *Yea, and Amen*; and thou wilt fulfill them to the uttermost. Herein is our hope. Our own power—how soon is it diminished, as a summer brook that dries so that there is none of it! All our virtues and purposes of good are as a summer cloud, and as the early dew. Thou hast so royally endowed us that we find the burden of life in carrying all that belongs to us equally and well too great for our strength; and we are perpetually running to excess, or are diminished by lack. We come short in many things, and in many things we overact. On every side we find limitation, and imperfection, and much sin, and actual, purposed transgression. O Lord our God! If it were not for the hope of thy help, if it were not for thine own succoring spirit, if we did not float in an atmosphere of love, if we were not nourished by the yearning of thy heart we should be in despair. Nor would we lift up one endeavor. But because thou art bringing us forward from infancy to the ripeness of manhood in Christ Jesus; because as a patient Teacher thou art willing to bear with our dulness, and with our fractious disobedience; because, having loved us as a faithful Parent thou wilt love us unto the end; because thou hast made it the business of thy love to take our faults, and to bear our infirmities for the curing of them, therefore have we hope and strong confidence. We are sure of salvation; for who shall pluck us out of thine hand? and what shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus? Our weakness would destroy us; and our sin would submerge us; but our sin is not so mighty as thy love; and our imperfections are not able to stand against the conquering might of thy divine excellency. With thee is all power—and all power that nourishes. Thou art terrible, and to be feared; and yet, behind all fear is the everlasting flow of love. By that thou wilt redeem; by that thou wilt in the end conquer. And we rejoice in the infiniteness of thy nature, and the infinite applications of thy nature to ours; so that all of our life is but a getting ready to be born, and the earth is but the womb, and the morning of death and of the resurrection is our true birth. Thou art moulding and fashioning every part, to bring us forth into the glorious image of the true man in the heavenly state.

Grant that in all the infirmities of life, and in all trials, we may not be so foolish as not to know that we are sons of God. Grant that we may not count our name here, and go about the tent as if that were a mansion, and look upon the wilderness as if that were our Father's garden. We are away from home so long as we are in the body and absent from the Lord. May we therefore look out of sorrow into the land of joy; out of trouble into the cloudless land; out of all sin and remorse into that blessed land where there shall be no more sin nor sorrow. It washed tears and groans, being burdened here, may it only create in us a conception of the blessedness of that heaven where thou shalt wipe every tear from our eyes, and where we shall go out no more forever, but be forever with the Lord. We thank thee even for glimpses of that day. We thank thee for the ineffable peace which thou dost breathe upon us of peace through forgiveness. We thank thee for thy fidelity. We thank thee for the pledges which thou art giving us evermore. Thou art not sending thy messengers to encourage us. Thou art saying to us, "This is the way." When it seems as if there were no path, when it is hidden, thine angels guide us, and our feet find it. We are never forsaken. When most we seem alone, when we seem most cut out, when we are forsaken of men, and despised of them, we are nearer to thee than ever. For it is the nature of thine heart to run first and most to those who need thee most. Thou art, by those who are in extreme sorrow, by those that mourn over earthly abuses; by those who sit in darkness; by those who die for lack of vision.

And now, O Lord, we rebuke ourselves that we ever doubted thee, or counted our weakness to us. What do we need who have thee? Why do we mourn departing, riches who have riches that fade not, in the heavenly land? What matters it though we are cut asunder, heart from heart, if we are to be joined again in the bright land beyond, where

all misapprehension shall cease; where all mistakes shall end; where all alienations shall glow with endless love; where thou shalt unite again all to thee, and all to each other, and they shall behold each other without spot or blemish, or any such thing? Oh! grant us faith of this glorious union beyond, and quicken our patience and our forbearance one with another here. Comfort us in all our burdens and discouragements. Lead us as little children are led by the father's hand along the rugged path of life. And may we at last win Jesus, our Mark, and Aim, and the Prize of our high calling.

We pray that thou wilt be with those who are not with us, but are of us, and whose longing thoughts brood this place. Comfort them. Heaven is open everywhere; and may they be able, from their sick couches, to take something of the joy of thy salvation. Prepare for death, those that are appointed thereunto. Walk gently with them. Do not bear them up unto storms, but carry them out of storms into the land of peace, unwet with tears. Be near to all those who are to mourn and are to have the surprise of sudden and overwhelming afflictions. Grant that they may be comforted, and hold fast their faith, even as thy disciples did when thou wert taken away from them, and they were scattered as sheep without a shepherd. Remember thine anguish for thine own, and remember all that are in anguish now, or are to be led into the way of sharp trial. And be with those, we beseech of thee, who see their earthly plans overturned; upon whom have fallen the tempest, whirling and sweeping away all the hopes of their life. And grant that they may not esteem themselves overthrown and destroyed because their outward good is gone, to whom remains yet God, and heaven, and country, and life, with the hope of honor and truth untarnished. Grant, we beseech of thee, that they may rise up into spirit-wealth, and that they may approve their manhood as superior to all outward circumstances.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt be with the tempted. How many are there that set snares for their fellow men! How mighty is the scope, and how cunning is the wisdom of the adversary of men's souls. Be with all those whose temptation is greater than they can bear. They are thine. Let them not fall. And if they fall, do not hate them. Let us not hate them. Lift them up. Teach us to imitate thee in lifting them up. And we beseech of thee that thou wilt grant that that great mercy and grace which is revealed in Jesus Christ toward the lost may be revealed in some measure toward us. Oh! let not our power and prosperity make us arrogant, and cold, and set us aside from our fellow men. By that which thou gavest us, may we hear thee saying, "Freely have ye received, freely give." May we be afraid to be prospered without growing more humane, and more generous. May we dread that prosperity which hardens the heart, and makes us proud and worldly.

And so, dear Lord, dwell with us all, according to the necessities of our case. Suit thy providence to our want. Grant that we may adapt ourselves to thy providence. Lead us so long as we live safely, with a song, both by day and by night. And grant that at last, when we shall have passed through the scenes of this mortal life, and through the trial and meek of death itself, we may find heaven more than we thought it to be. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, what thou hast reserved for those that love thee. May we find it all, and finding thee, be satisfied with thy likeness.

And to thy name, O Father, Son and Holy Spirit! shall be praise everlasting. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our heavenly Father, we beseech of thee that thou wilt follow with thy blessing the word of truth and exhortation which we have spoken. Bless us in all our relations one to another. Make us more gentle. Make us more tender-hearted. May we make haste to find excuses for our neighbors, but may we be rigorous with ourselves. May we never forgive our own faults; but may we forgive the faults of everybody else. And we pray that thou we may learn to be just at home, and to be benevolent and humane abroad. So we pray that thou wouldst mould us, that we may walk among men diffusing the bounty of God's great love and kindness, making human life richer, and sweeter, and purer, and more joyful, until at last thou hast served thyself by us. And then take us home to heaven, where we will praise the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, evermore. *Amen.*



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